

Ref: Ball Hill and Hatt Common community-led, government-funded, internet speed upgrade (to full fibre broadband)

Hi,

Apologies for disturbing you during the festive season but if you are interested in improving your broadband service, in all likelihood for no upfront cost, I would appreciate you reading further.

Summary

It is possible to deliver fibre to the premises (FTTP) broadband infrastructure capable of supporting internet speeds of **1 Gbps** (1000 Mbps), at present we typically have *up to* 76 Mbps, to 102 homes/businesses in part of Ball Hill and Hatt Common whereby **all fibre network installation costs are covered by central government and county council vouchers** – the home owner / business pays nothing for the fibre network installation.

To be eligible for vouchers the house owner / business commits to purchasing full fibre broadband from a provider of their choice, for a **service of their choice** within 2 months of the new fibre network going live. Not all fibre broadband suppliers provide a service over the Openreach network.

Details

I live on Woolton Hill Road and during September I started an enquiry with Openreach to find out if it was possible to obtain a FTTP broadband solution for a number of houses along Woolton Hill Road in Ball Hill.

In our community we would be eligible for vouchers from The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) **and** an associated Top Up scheme from Hampshire Council that would **cover the cost of installation**. For residential premises the DCMS voucher is £1,500 and Hampshire Council will supplement this with an additional £1,500, making a total per household of £3,000. For business premises the DCMS voucher is £3,500 but there is no Top Up from Hampshire Council. Businesses can be a company or a Sole Trader. DCMS ask for proof of business if claiming for a business voucher.

Openreach operate a **Community Funded Project** scheme (CFP) which is aimed at helping communities who wish to take advantage of the DCMS voucher scheme, simplifying the project for the community. Openreach provided me with a quotation for fibre infrastructure installation last week and as a consequence I am writing to you now.

Openreach provided a quotation for 102 premises (based on how the network is arranged). Your property is one of these premises. Openreach have suggested that the CFP would be arranged as a Demand Led project. Normally Openreach would require a legal entity to sign a contract with them for the installation, but in the case of a Demand Led project they work differently. For a Demand Led installation they ask **members of the CFP (i.e. individual households) to “Pledge” their vouchers** to the project thereby avoiding the requirement for the community to form a legal entity.

The cost to be covered for the network installation is £99,999 i.e. £980.38 per house/business if all 102 premises were to pledge vouchers. Openreach only receive vouchers up to the value of the

installation. They would not receive 102 vouchers worth £3,000. The cost per house/business would increase as the number of vouchers pledged reduces, therefore to cover the cost of £99,999 we would need 34 pledges based on £3,000 of vouchers per house/business. However, due to experience, when setting up a Demand Led project they require vouchers to be pledged to the value of 130% of the installation cost (i.e. **44 pledges**). This is to allow a contingency should people drop out, move or decide not to take up a fibre broadband.

When pledging the voucher **individuals** would be **committing to take out a fibre broadband service** (to replace your existing broadband contract) within circa 2 months of the new fibre network going live.

If more than 30% of people who pledge their vouchers dropped out for any reason Openreach would contact those who have dropped out to cover the shortfall because they have not up-held their side of the contract. In their experience 30% is usually more than enough of a buffer to cover drop outs and if that is correct there would be no cost to anyone for the installation.

At the moment I am the point of contact with Openreach for the community project simply because I started the process with them. I have spoken to a couple of other residents and they would be happy to form part of a group to progress this.

The existing DCMS voucher scheme ends on 31st March 2021 so we will need to move relatively quickly if we are to take advantage of it. So if any of the following are true:

- a) You are keen to help organise this community-led project;
- b) You are interested in the idea of faster broadband but want more details;
- c) You have done some research and would already be willing to pledge towards FTTP broadband.

then please reply to this letter by email (ideally before 17 January 2021) to:

fibreinballhill@btinternet.com

If you want more details we will send you some links to find out more and/or if you have specific questions we will do our best to answer them directly.

Note that individuals would not be making any financial commitment until they pledge vouchers directly to Openreach. Replying to this letter does not indicate a firm commitment.

Many thanks for your time if you have read this far. If there is sufficient interest in upgrading the local broadband infrastructure I hope we can come together as a group to move this forward.

Regards,

Mike O'Brien